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ABSTRACT

The use of photography to add a new dimension to outdoor education activities is described in this paper. It is noted that photography can be an aid to outdoor education in a number of ways: students learn to communicate ideas visually, students learn to think through problems and find ways of solving them, students gain increased appreciation of photographic arts, photographic activities provide opportunities for students to work together in meaningful ways and to practice basic skills, and students can produce materials for display. Some of the uses of photography in learning activities are to bring distant objects closer, to record information for use in reports, and to provide an art medium to express an individual's feeling about his natural surroundings. Also included in this paper are descriptions of 10 activities involving photography which can be used in an outdoor education program. (PS)

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Photography in Outdoor Education

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The use of photography can add a new dimension to outdoor education activities and contribute to the achievement of many worthwhile learning activities. Teachers and students need not be experts to obtain good results with the readily available, economically priced photographic equipment. With the new, easy to load, easy to operate cameras, students and teachers can become "experts" by simply reading the directions enclosed with the camera. While almost every teacher has access to a school camera it is often only considered in terms of personal use. As a result the advantages of a camera for school use are often overlooked by educators. Few administrators and teachers ever consider ordering a camera and photographic supplies at budget time. Yet a single camera can be shared by classes and used in a variety of ways.

Study outside the classroom is not adding to the curriculum, but rather a means of implementing certain objectives whereby curriculum becomes the experience of the child. Photography can be used as a motivation and as a tool in learning important skills, concepts and understanding. Many teachers are extending their classrooms to the out-of-doors to teach those aspects best taught out-of-doors. Photography can be a medium for bringing the outdoor experience into the classroom for those aspects best taught indoors. Photography lends itself in a number of ways:

1. Students learn to communicate ideas visually.
2. Students learn to think through problems and find ways of solving them.

3. Students gain increased appreciation of photographic arts and are sometimes led to new fields of interest.

4. Photographic activities provide opportunities for students to work together in meaningful ways. The tasks of planning, writing, photographing, using and evaluating photographic projects can be carried out cooperatively.

5. Photography can provide an opportunity for functional practice of basic skills. The production of a slide series and tape recording narration would involve developing an idea, sequential order, written and oral expression, library research and outlining.

6. Students can produce materials for assembly programs or materials to be shown to community groups in explanation of the school program.

Use of Photography in Outdoor Education:

Photography lends itself to outdoor education in a number of ways. It may be employed to make extreme close-ups or to bring distant objects closer. A bettle may be dramatically emphasized in a close-up photo. A bird's nest high in a tree can be brought closer through the use of a telephoto lens. Photography lends itself well to recording information for use in reports, or for purposes of comparison. Photographing a certain tree during the various seasons would be an example. Photography can also be used as an art medium to express an individual's feelings about his natural surroundings. Finally, in an effort to understand the immediate school environment it is often necessary to exceed its bounds. Where it is impossible or impracticable for an entire class to make a trip one student or a teacher can report back to the class. A class might be investigating how nature recycles water and how the school community consumes it. A trip, with a camera, to a local water

authority, sewerage treatment plant or sewer installation site would be very helpful in answering questions about where the school's water comes from and where it goes after use at the school.

Outdoor Education Activities Involving Photography:

The following are brief descriptions of outdoor education activities where photography can be used. Keep in mind that the camera and film are used to enhance and contribute to the achievement of the learning objectives. The use of photography can be distracting when it serves no useful purpose. The teacher will be the best judge of when and where to use it. These activities are only a few examples of what can be done. You will find the best activities to be those that develop out of your imagination, experience and knowledge of your particular outdoor education program.

Activity 1: Mark and photograph a small, specific plot of grass. Shoot a series of close-ups showing the various components of the grass plot (types of grasses, weeds, etc.). This activity can be used to stimulate and develop observation and research skills by having the children identify the various plants they have observed and photographed. Another set of photos can be taken during the winter if the plot is carefully marked. This leads to many questions. What happened to the weeds? In what way does the grass appear changed?

Activity 2: The teacher and students can photograph examples of wind and water erosion on soil around the school grounds. The photos can be used in reports as evidence, to show causes and possible remedies and to make recommendations to the school principal. A follow-up photo report can be made after these problems are solved.

Activity 3: The teacher and students can each photograph their own tree and shrub. A photo can be taken of a tree during each season and a photo of its various parts--shape of leaves, bark, color, etc. to be used for display or in a report. As one student said, "It's easy to understand how trees work, if you have your own tree."

Activity 4: Photographs of playground equipment can be used to introduce experiments involving a number of science principles. The swing can illustrate a pendulum, the slide an inclined plane and see-saw or teeter-tatter a balance lever.

Activity 5: Photographs of a large thermometer placed in various areas around the playground can be used to introduce an investigation into the causes of the variation in temperatures.

Activity 6: Photographs can be used in the following activities as a record of: development of nature trails; seasonal changes; weathering and almost any outdoor learning experience.

Activity 7: Photographs can be used in any inventory of the school grounds. Subjects might include: safety hazards, ground cover, traffic patterns, amount and type of erosion caused by people.

Activity 8: Photographs can be used for nature trail orientation and instruction.

Activity 9: Children might try selecting a subject to investigate and report using photography as the only medium. Sample topics might include: How plants serve as shelter for animals; How plants provide nesting materials; Animals of our school yard.

Activity 10: Don't overlook the many possibilities available if any construction is taking place on the school site. Even if there is no present construction don't overlook the possibilities that waste materials from the original construction might be buried close to the surface on the school grounds. Your students might enjoy an "archeological dig" to recover the materials. Photos to compare the deterioration or lack of deterioration would be just one use of photography in this worthwhile activity.